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SUBJECT: FDLR POLITICAL OPERATIVES IN RWANDA

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Classified By: Charge Michael E. Thurstson, reason 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary. GOR sources confirm recent reports of activity in Rwanda by political operatives of the exiled Forces Democratique de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR). FDLR operatives have been arrested both inside the country, and at its borders. These incidents reflect episodic attempts by the FDLR to maintain some minimal presence inside the country. While no threat to national security, these attempts do show that Rwanda has continuing domestic concerns about the FDLR and its genocidal leadership. End summary.

¶2. (C) Two provincial governors and the security advisor to the Prime Minister have in recent days confirmed occasional press reports of FDLR political "cadres" either arrested inside Rwanda or caught attempting to enter through one of Rwanda's border posts. Eastern Provincial Governor Theoneste Mutshindashyaka told polchief February 2 that pro-government New Times articles in the fall, recounting the arrest of FDLR "cadres" in his province, were essentially accurate. "We do find them from time to time," he said. In the most recent episode, he said, the GOR arrested seven FDLR operatives at the Rusumo Falls border post in southeast Rwanda. The men told suspiciously identical stories of their home villages and reasons for being outside Rwanda, pricking the interest of immigration officials. Mutshindashyaka said that the men had traveled from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to Tanzania, transiting, he thought, Burundi. When other operatives are caught inside Rwanda, he said, operatives appear to be engaged in quiet "mobilization" efforts, spreading news of their organization's continued viability, and perhaps attempting some recruitment.

¶3. (C) Northern Governor Boniface Rucagu gave polchief a similar account on February 7, saying that FDLR operatives did cross over from neighboring DRC and Uganda, attempting to proselytize among local villagers. He suggested their efforts met with little success, and ended generally with their arrest. In his province, said the governor, he had a strong "peace-building" program urging reconciliation, a message "we never stop giving," he said, and this program and his personal attention to it left "little room" for FDLR messages. Nevertheless, he said, he and his security personnel kept watch on FDLR activities. (Note: provincial governors chair monthly provincial security committee meetings, attended by police, immigration, national security service, military and others, with compiled reports forwarded to the presidency, the office of the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Local Government. Those attending the monthly meetings also forward their own reports internally up their respective chains of command. End note).

14. (C). Richard Masozera, security advisor at the office of the Prime Minister, on February 8 characterized the FDLR "approaches" as "intermittent sensitization campaigns," not involving active recruiting. "They want to say to people, we are still around, we will come back some day to fight, don't forget us." He noted that the GOR had a number of reintegrated FDLR military officers, including Major General Paul Rwarakabiye and Brigadier General Jerome Ngendahimana, and he said that "these guys can counter whatever the FDLR guys say." Any claim by the FDLR operatives, for example, that the FDLR cannot come home and peacefully resume their lives in Rwanda was easily refuted, he said, by the presence of these officers and GOR publicity campaigns about them.

15. (C) Some press accounts of FDLR activity are outright fabrications, however. For example, a January story in local newspapers recounted accusations of FDLR "meetings" held at the Supreme Court, the office of the Prosecutor General, and the Ministry of Justice. Embosso sat with Deputy Prosecutor General Hitiyaremye in his office February 9, and he laughingly pointed to his hardwood conference table, where "we were all supposed to be scheming together with the FDLR." The story, he said, came from a disgruntled prosecution service employee who had nursed personal grudges for some time and had finally "let loose" his "silly" charges. The man had been dismissed, and was under investigation by the police for impersonating a security officer.

16. (C) Comment. While the military threat from the FDLR has receded, it does mount occasional efforts to infiltrate political operatives. GOR officials generally consider these efforts to be ineffectual, but they do monitor them and make arrests when the operatives are discovered. The GOR welcomes the return of FDLR personnel who wish to reintegrate themselves into Rwandan society, and its demobilization camp at Mutobo continues its quarterly programs for returned FDLR soldiers and their families. FDLR activists returning on the sly to campaign surreptitiously meet another fate -- a jail cell.

17. (C) Comment continued. However, potentially fertile ground for FDLR operatives may lie in the tensions which do surface concerning the gacaca traditional justice system for accused genocidaires. The vast majority of completed gacaca cases, some 51,000 so far, have been adjudicated without incident (reftel), and concern the acts of brutal murderers who have been, finally, judged. However, there are individual accounts of false accusations, and the use of gacaca to pursue personal vendettas. Real genocidaires, released from detention in Rwanda, and anxious for an alternative to decades in prison after their gacaca case is heard, might turn a willing ear to FDLR operatives. So, too, might those who face false accusations. End comment.

THURSTON